

SCAG Community Open Space Case Studies

Community open space case studies are intended to present a focused portrait of the diversity of issues and opportunities relating to these systems within the SCAG region. Community character, geography, demographics, and other factors that influence the overall form and function of community open space vary widely in the region. The case studies present a cross-section of this regional diversity, and where possible, showcase unique open space programs or initiatives already being undertaken.

Initially nearly 30 communities spread through the 14 SCAG subregions were identified because they showed promise based on an initial set of criteria that included the availability of existing and planned open space data, the presence of low- to moderate-income communities and underrepresented groups, community development character, and susceptibility to change. The selection of potential community areas was also based on their inclusion in SCAG's list of Post 2010 Compass 2% Strategy Opportunity Areas.

From the longer list of communities, a subset of 16 case study communities was identified using a refined set of criteria that includes demographic data, information about existing parks, urban forestry and community gardening projects, greenways and trails, and notable open space plans and/or programs. In order to compensate for the limitations of available regional data, the consultant team chose to focus on a set of specific representative issues or themes relating to the provision of community open spaces. For example, by focusing on issues such as local distribution of parks, and by providing pertinent examples of best practices, a useful snapshot of current efforts to plan for and build new community open space can be created. This snapshot of best practices can then be used to generate guidelines and policies for new community open space demonstration projects and/or programs for the region,

Ratio and Distribution of Open Space

There is a high degree of variability in the SCAG region with regard to the ratio of "parks to people", as well as the geographic distribution of open space. Not every community is created equal in terms of how much open space is available to residents of local jurisdictions. This section of the case studies analysis will examine several SCAG communities in terms of the overall amounts of open space provided, and to whom it is provided. The discussion of distribution will focus on communities with low, medium and high ratio distribution of community open space. Further, efforts to improve the ratio and distribution of community open space will be illuminated by examples of local community planning and redevelopment efforts that are resulting in infill developments incorporating significant new open space areas. Existing and planned open space will also be correlated with Compass 2% Strategy Areas as possible. These case studies will be illustrated with mapped, statistical and narrative information.

Potential case studies:

1. Low Distribution: Azusa (Monrovia Nursery Specific Plan) Compton or Inglewood (Hollywood Park Redevelopment)
2. Medium Distribution: Irvine (Orange County Great Park) Ontario (New Model Colony)
3. High Distribution: Long Beach or Ventura

Access to Open Space

Communities within the SCAG region face demographic and development pressures that challenge their ability to identify or commit undeveloped areas for new parks. Therefore, local jurisdictions must be creative with regard to the provision of new open space. One increasingly implemented strategy is to redevelop underutilized or abandoned areas, such as old rail corridors, as linear parks, parkways or greenways. These corridors are particularly important due to their ability to "tie it all together," by connecting smaller, seemingly disjointed open spaces. Bikeways can also serve this purpose. Access, in this context, is seen as a way of providing new corridors that serve as linkages to existing or new open spaces. Further, development of significant new regional transit systems in the region is providing opportunities to develop linked public gathering places and open spaces. This section will describe (with narratives and imagery) and analyze

significant cases in which access to or linkage between open spaces is being created or enhanced within the SCAG region.

Potential case studies:

1. Rails to Trails: Pacific Electric Trail in San Bernardino County, Culver City Median Parkway
2. Transit corridors: Metro Orange Line Greenway/Busway & Chandler Bikeway in North Hollywood, Santa Monica Boulevard Linear Parkway/Median, public plazas & open spaces at Metro Red Line and Gold Line Stations

Multiple Uses & Functions for Open Space

Many local community open spaces are used for multiple purposes and serve multiple functions, and are the product of multiple planning objectives. Good examples are provided in the numerous river restoration and watershed management initiatives being pursued in the SCAG region. These seek to improve water quality while providing new usable open spaces and recreational opportunities. Further, implementing sustainability objectives more broadly within communities can result in meeting high environmental standards while increasing existing levels of open space. This section will describe (with narratives and imagery) multi-purpose open space planning projects meeting sustainability objectives in selected SCAG communities.

Potential case studies:

1. River Parks: Santa Ana River, Los Angeles River, Santa Clara River, San Gabriel River
2. Compton: Compton Creek Watershed Management Plan
3. Santa Monica: Sustainable City Plan, Watershed Management Plan

Increasing the Urban Forest

A new awareness of the role that air quality and environmental health plays in determining the quality of life within local neighborhoods has stimulated efforts to improve local environments by planting trees. Urban forestry is now seen as a useful way of improving environmental quality at

the local level, due to the fact that trees absorb high levels of carbon dioxide, provide cooling microclimates, reduce the heat island effect, and can also provide habitat for local wildlife. This section will describe (with narratives and imagery) model urban forestry programs in several SCAG communities.

Potential case studies:

1. Los Angeles: City of LA/Tree People Million Trees LA initiative
2. Santa Clarita: Department of Public Works urban forest program
3. Palmdale: Department of Public Works urban forest program

Supporting Urban Agriculture

Urban gardens and farms can build economic capital while improving people's quality of life and preserving remaining open space. Many individuals and families within the SCAG region rely on urban gardens and local agricultural lands to support their efforts to meet their nutritional needs, and local growers also sell their produce at local farmer's markets. Initiatives to support urban agriculture also respond to multiple objectives to reduce the time and energy cost of transporting food, and increase food security through local production. This section will present (in narratives and imagery) efforts to preserve existing agricultural lands within urbanizing communities, and to build new urban agriculture programs within the SCAG region.

Potential case studies:

1. Ventura County/Moorpark: Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources
2. Culver City and Long Beach: Community gardens initiatives
3. Riverside—Historic citrus preservation